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To our new Hamilton Spouses:

Congratulations on your orders and welcome to the Hamilton family! The Charleston area is a wonderful place to live and we hope you will enjoy your time here. We are Leah and Ashley, the Ombudsmen for the Hamilton. As you may know, Ombudsmen are official volunteers who are designated as a link between a Coast Guard unit command and the families of those who serve. We know from experience that boat life can be challenging, and want to help you in any way we can.

Our role is to:

- provide you with information and messages from the command
- familiarize you with a variety of Coast Guard and other military programs
- keep you informed of the ship's plans and movements
- pass along activities of interest and information for military families
- refer you to sources of assistance during crisis situations
- direct your questions and concerns to the command
- maintain confidentiality on all matters (except suicide threats and abuse allegations)

Feel free to contact us anytime via email or phone. We look forward to meeting you!

Hamilton Pre-Deployment Information for Spouses

Deployment is a fact of Coast Guard life. To conduct operational missions or to maintain the highest readiness standards possible, units and cutters deploy on a regular basis. Preparing for deployment starts long before the ship gets underway. Discuss financial and household responsibilities before your spouse departs and make sure arrangements are made with other family members to share responsibilities during the deployment. Discuss your family's long term needs and take steps to make sure those needs will be met while your spouse is away. Organize financial matters and have plans in case of emergencies. Patience, a sense of humor, and good communications are vital for all family members.

Family Check-In Form

One of the most important pre-deployment tasks you can do is to make sure your ombudsmen have your contact information. The best way to do this is to have your spouse fill out a Family Check-In Form. With this document, the ombudsmen will be authorized to share important information with you (such as changes in patrol dates) or make contact with you or your spouse in case of an emergency. Not filling this out could delay or prevent communication from the ship/ombudsmen to your family.

Personal Finances

Discuss and make arrangements for family finances prior to deployment. Developing a budget will help you and your spouse meet bills and set aside funds for other necessities, including port calls.

Email/Social Media

Emails/social media posts are not confidential and may be seen by others. Never email/post sensitive information about ship locations or movements, as this may jeopardize the operational security of your Coast Guardsman's command. Never use email/social media to pass along gossip and use caution when communicating news about other families within the command. A good approach is to let other families communicate their own news to their own Coast Guardsman and to allow ombudsmen to share any information about USCGC Hamilton.

Disaster Preparedness and Crisis Response

The Charleston area, like most coastal areas, is vulnerable to natural disasters such as flooding and hurricanes. This makes keeping a file of important papers even more essential. Maintain an emergency kit containing items such as water, food, clothing, flashlights, etc. Families should also have a potential evacuation plan. Atlanta, GA is considered our safe haven when the Charleston area is evacuated. Know the potential threats that may affect your area and complete Emergency Contact Cards for each family member. For information about Ready Coast Guard, visit www.uscg.mil/worklife/ready.asp and download Family Emergency Plan and Emergency Contact Card forms for your family or family members within your command.

ID Cards

Check military ID cards. If they are due to expire during the deployment, get the paperwork and signatures that are necessary before your spouse is underway. In this area, ID card offices are located at Joint Base Charleston and the Coast Guard Base. Make sure that all DEERS requirements are in order before you visit. FLETC, the base where Hamilton is homeported, does not accept regular military ID cards. You will need to request a FLETC badge. Your spouse must do this for you through paperwork at the visitor center.

Time for the Kids

Families should make sure that children understand why ships must sail and take a parent away. Active communication between service members and their children at home is very important both prior to and especially during a deployment. Use maps to show where your spouse will be going, explaining oceans and ports.

Life on the Homefront

Deployment can create feelings of frustration, depression, anger, loneliness and sadness. If you or a member of your family is experiencing emotional difficulties during the deployment, the WorkLife office or the Chaplain can provide you with support groups or counseling. Assistance can also be located via the CG SUPRT Program. You can contact the program 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, by calling 1-855-CG-SUPRT ([1-855-247-8778](tel:1-855-247-8778)) or by going to the CG SUPRT website at www.CGSUPRT.com. It also helps to keep busy while your spouse is away. You might

consider connecting with other spouses through your Ombudsman, local spouses club, or online.

Ombudsman

Your ombudsmen are a very important resource to use while your Coast Guardsman is deployed. USCGC Hamilton is fortunate to have two. Your command has arranged for communication between the ombudsmen and the commanding officer in the event of family problems and emergencies. Make sure to have your ombudsmen contact information readily available at all times. In addition, make sure your ombudsmen have your contact information (Family Check In Form), in the event there is an emergency that requires evacuations or accountability of family members. Not only are the ombudsmen your link to information and communication with USCGC Hamilton, but they are a great source of information in helping guide you to different benefits/resources for many different needs.